

# USSR AND THE GULAGS

First of all, let's break the norms and put here my resources. I exclude Werth because it's through numerous works that I will quote him, and you'll find all of them in the section resources of the main wikipedia article. So here's what I'll use, with the addition of the famous antisoviet historian Werth.

Sources:

Anne Applebaum, Goulag : Une histoire, 2005

Nikolai Feodorovitch Bugai, Goda 30-40 : narodov SSSR deportatsii kvoprosu [La question de la déportation des peuples de l'URSS dans les années 1930 et 1940], revue Istoriia SSSR no 6, 1989;

Jean Radvanyi, La Nouvelle Russie, Collection U, Armand Colin, 2004, 3e édition mise à jour, page 58, arrondi à 50.000

That will be my main sources about the toll of deaths, prisoner numbers, and death rates, all extracted from the French Goulag wikipedia article. These sources are based upon actual soviet archives analysis, and i will begin with the following quote that is extracted from The french Gulag wikipedia article:

Grâce à l'ouverture des archives soviétiques, des données fiables existent pour les quatorze années du 1er janvier 1934 au 31 décembre 1947 : elles montrent que, dans l'ensemble des camps du Goulag, 963 866 prisonniers sont morts, soit environ 69 000 par an ; comme la mortalité était d'un peu plus de 10 % des déportés, cela permet d'évaluer leur nombre total durant ces 14 ans à environ dix millions (5 % de la population).

Thanks to the opening of the Soviet archives, reliable data

exist for the fourteen years from January 1, 1934 to December 31, 1947: they show that, in all of the Gulag camps, 963,866 prisoners died, or approximately 69,000 per year; as the mortality rate was just over 10% of the deportees, this makes it possible to assess their total number during these 14 years at around ten million (5% of the population).

Keep in mind that between those two dates, there is this small event called the second world war, that lead to an inflation of the death rate in the prison. Also, the 10% of death rate is a Conquest data who has been clearly refuted since. And what they call reliable simply mean western historians.

In the 2000's, Nicolas Werth, a famous anticommunist academician who's one of the main contributor of the infamous Black book of communism, reworked on the numbers of death rate in Gulags, downed it to "between 3-7% pre WW2, and between 0.4-1.2% post wars." I won't recalculate their numbers on the Werth basis, because there is honestly no need to do it. You already see the flaw. About Werth's analysis of the Gulag numbers, and so Conquest's ones, in 1997, an academician, Lily Marcou, blamed him for his lack of seriousness in his work, because Werth was advocating for Conquest's number of 20 millions of deaths, only to, a few year later, defend not even 3 millions and pretend to be serious. But that's historiographical debate, let's just keep their datas and move forward. I will use Applebaum's data again.

This graphic is a common resource. Let's take a random pre-war year and analyse it. 1936. So as Applebaum's numbers, there are around 1.300.000 prisoners in USSR. Now I will quote another Historian who had access to Soviet archives, Jean Radvanyi, in La Nouvelle Russie.

In peace time, pre-war, the numbers of dead in the Gulag

was around 50.000 a year. It's numbers from the archives. Flat. Which mean that in 1936, by Applebaum's numbers, there were 1.3 million prisoners, and if there were 50k death, it make 3.85% of death rate. We're far from a Nazi concentration camp, it's not even comparable.

It's to be noted here that the % of prisoners is around 1-1.5% of the total population of USSR at the time, as there were around 180 millions inhabitants (1937-1939 recensement) in USSR.

Who was sent to the Gulag ?

Let me quote another time Werth about what Gulag prisoners were:

De son côté, le chercheur Nicolas Werth indique que la grande majorité des personnes déportées dans les années 1930 étaient des innocents pris dans la rue pour compléter les quotas de déportation, et qui purgeaient, sauf exception, des peines de droit commun n'excédant pas cinq ans.

For his part, the researcher Nicolas Werth indicates that the vast majority of people deported in the 1930s were innocent people caught on the streets to supplement the deportation quotas, and who were serving, with some exceptions, common law sentences not exceeding five years.

It's written black on white, they were in their vast majority common law delinquents and weren't sentenced to death, lifetime or things like that, they were condemned to prison for a few years maximum for the vast majority and 95% of them got out of Gulag.

Basically they pretend in the same time that Gulags were massive political repression and mass killing camps against political prisoners, and that the vast majority of people weren't even politicized. They pretend that they

were mass killing concentration camps, where in fact a vast majority of people were sentenced for a few years and get out of the Gulag. They pretend dozen of millions of people died, when it fact it was not even 1 millions between 34 and 47, so including the purge and the world war, as even westerner historians who have worked on the archive have reported.

Does it make the Gulag system good? Hell no, but it clearly shows how much the western propaganda can have a hypocritic double standard when it come to what's moral and what's not. Let's make another case study. A modern time comparison.

Let me introduce you to nowadays USA prisoners number. And before digging further, I want to put two fact under the spotlight.

First, the 13th Amendment that says that:

Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Second, how they are currently using prisoners as slave labors, as the 2018 U.S prisoners strike shows us. Let me quote their revendications:

Immediate improvements to the conditions of prisons and prison policies that recognize the humanity of imprisoned men and women. An immediate end to prison slavery. All persons imprisoned in any place of detention under United States jurisdiction must be paid the prevailing wage in their state or territory for their labor. The Prison Litigation Reform Act must be rescinded, allowing imprisoned humans a proper channel to address grievances and violations of their rights. The Truth in Sentencing Act and the Sentencing Reform Act must be rescinded so that imprisoned humans have a possibility of rehabilitation and parole. No human shall be sentenced to Death by Incarceration or serve any

sentence without the possibility of parole. An immediate end to the racial overcharging, over-sentencing, and parole denials of Black and brown humans. Black humans shall no longer be denied parole because the victim of the crime was white, which is a particular problem in southern states. An immediate end to racist gang enhancement laws targeting Black and brown humans. No imprisoned human shall be denied access to rehabilitation programs) at their place of detention because of their label as a violent offender. State prisons must be funded specifically to offer more rehabilitation services. Pell grants must be reinstated in all US states and territories. The voting rights of all confined citizens serving prison sentences, pretrial detainees, and so-called "ex-felons" must be counted. Representation is demanded. All voices count.

Or we could have spoken about how they are used to takedown the firefighter's salary, by being sent to fight the Californian fire for "between \$2.90 and \$5.12 per day, plus an additional \$1 per hour during active emergency for their potentially life-threatening efforts. The firefighters they work alongside earn an average of \$91,000 each year before overtime pay and bonuses."

In brief being a prisoners in 2020 in the UA isn't really a pleasing thing to say the very least.

In 2017, the USA, despite having only 5% of the world population, had 25% of the world prisoners. About the overall numbers of prisoners:

In 2012, approximately 2.2 million people were incarcerated in the United States<sup>1</sup> compared to approximately 2.3 million in January 2011, or approximately 0.9% of the adult population (238 million)

Let also talk about the Blacksites, the CIA secret prisons, or more specifically about Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse, and also about the Bagram one, or the Camp Nama one, and of course, Guantanamo Bay.

I mean, literally all the Iraq prison abuse scandal or even things like the Copper Green scandal, or the Maywand district murders, or heck even how their own USA Human right report of March 1, 2014, stated that the PATRIOTIC Act has "encroached upon rights and freedom of citizens, especially the people of ethnic minorities".

Here is another list of legal issues related to the 9/11. And we shouldn't forget the official 2002 torture memo, which aren't made in 1940. Another point that is always good to remember, USA had racist law up until 65. It is always good to remember it, because it still has effect nowadays. For instance:

As of 1993, young African-American men are eleven times more likely to be shot to death and nine times more likely to be murdered than their European American peers. Poverty, high unemployment, and broken families, all factors more prevalent in hypersegregated inner-cities, all contribute significantly to the unequal levels of violence experienced by African-Americans. Research has proven that the more segregated the surrounding European American suburban ring is, the rate of violent crime in the inner-city will rise.

Or also the fact that:

According to 2009 congressional testimony from Marc Maurer; while African Americans comprise 13% of the US population and 14% of monthly drug users they are 37% of the people arrested for drug offenses; as well as 56% of the people in state prisons for drug offenses. The U.S. Sentencing Commission reported in March 2010 that in the federal system black offenders receive sentences that are 10% longer than white offenders for the same crimes. A July 2009 report by the Sentencing Project found that two-thirds of the people in the U.S. with life sentences are non-white. According to a new report, African-Americans are three times as likely to be killed by police as white Americans.

But we aren't finished yet, we couldn't conclude without

citing the famous MKUltra project, in which the CIA tested many drugs, from LSD to DMT, on prisoners.

I'm not trying to negate the gulag existence, I'm factually relativising its importance, especially since we have way more bad things as of right now and no one cares. I mean, I could have talked about Camp Buca, in which the Deash leadership prepared their evil plan among 26.000 other prisoners, in what is seen as a model USA prison camp. Or the actual concentration camp scandal that is ongoing at the USA-Mexican borders. Or the "war on drugs" that put literally millions of people in jail for consuming drugs... And so on and so on...

I know that I may sound a bit out of topic, but it's important to put events in their context, and here it means to say what was the situation around the World at the time, because if we don't put things in some context, we will inevitably fall into an anachronistic analysis and so an incorrect one. Gulags were bad, clearly. Prisons aren't supposed to be good in the first place, and they still aren't good nowadays. But it's absolutely not comparable by any means with any type of Nazi camp. For instance, except for the death sentenced, almost no dead were wanted by the political power. Of course, there were abuse, numerous, and probably that there have been corruption, etc etc but there was no will to genocide or mass suppress people who went to the Gulag, or no such proof had been produced by the historiographical World as of today, or no consensual one.

And I'm comparing it to the USA both because of historical and economical context. The cold war and so the War between the two blocks of superpowers, but also as a capitalism vs communism ideological conflict, which leads me to my last and final point.

We are not liberal. I do recognize the numerous flaws and

abuse and perversion of the Gulag, just like I would with any other prison system, but I 100% recognize that if we put on a scale what was accomplished under Stalin and all those who profited from his leadership, versus those who had to unfairly suffer from it, it certainly is vastly more beneficial both for communism and the soviet citizens as whole, and i have no shame in being proud of it, especially when you see where does most of his critics live and who they are.

The best proof of it is the fact that it's not Stalin that made the purge. It was the whole party and state apparatus, and a big part of the people too. Especially all the abuse.

So when people say that Stalin did this or that, what they factually highlight is their very own lack of understanding of Marxism Leninism, of USSR and of the functioning of a Party.

Martin Sadr 14-12-2019



If a MAC line is expressed, then it will be clarified.  
If not, the reader should consider the work expressing the views of the writer